

**Testimony of James Muffett, President of Citizens for Traditional Values before
the Michigan House of Representatives
Government Operations Committee, February 15, 2012**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I welcome this opportunity to speak on this important issue. I am fully in support of the Respect for the Rights of Conscience Act of 2011.

In his essay on Property, written in 1792, James Madison said that a citizen in a free society has, “...*a property of peculiar value in his religious opinions, and in the profession and practice dictated by them.*” He went on to say that one’s “*Conscience is the most sacred of all property;*”

And he followed that statement with this: “*Where an excess of [government] power prevails, property of no sort is duly respected. No man is safe in his opinions, his person, his faculties, or his possessions.*”

The cry of the Revolution was, “Life, liberty and property.” The Declaration of Independence boldly declares to the whole world that we are endowed by our Creator with inalienable rights that include “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” The reason for that wording is clear. In the Founder’s view, there could be no pursuit of happiness without property rights, including conscience.

Protecting those rights is a primary duty of government. I think that’s called “Religious Freedom,” a powerful political truth that has historically set America apart and was an important part of the very fabric that made us the greatest free nation in the history of the world.

The Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod has taken a strong position against the mandate saying, “*This controversy is not merely about “birth control” and the Catholic Church’s views about it. It’s about mandating that we provide medications which kill life in the womb. And moreover, and perhaps even more ominous, it is about an overzealous government forcing coercive provisions that violate the consciences and rights of its citizens.*”

The current “do-gooder” class in Washington is bent on shoving their secular values on the rest of us. If the president can force religious employers, or anyone for that matter, to violate their religious views and their own conscience, the President can threaten any of our liberties.

This is not just about one denomination, it is about the most fundamental principle in the American form of Government—religious freedom.

I urge the passage of this resolution. / 85